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#17
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JIM SINCLAIR · RONDA PATTISON
THE MAXX
maxximized

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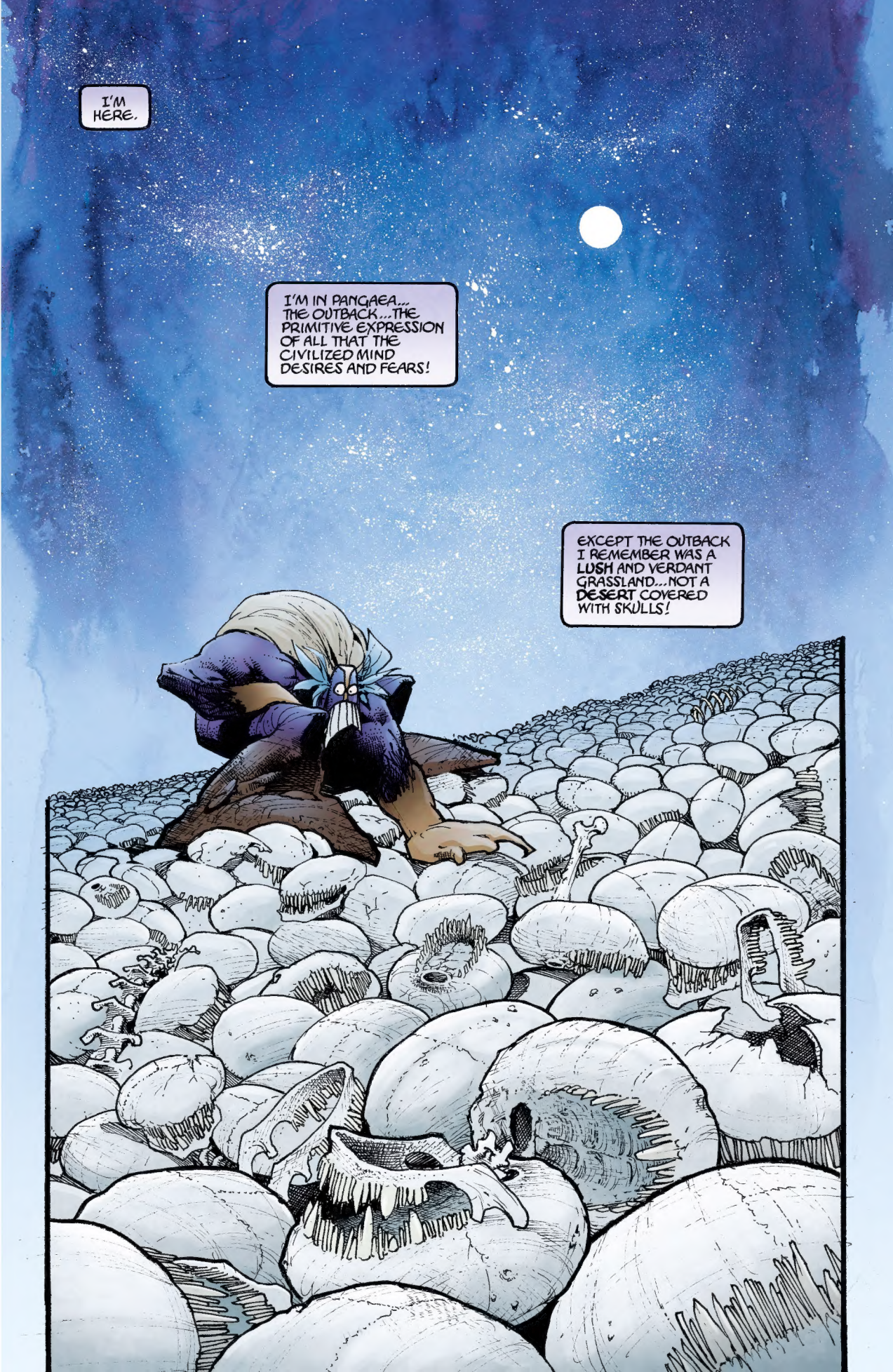
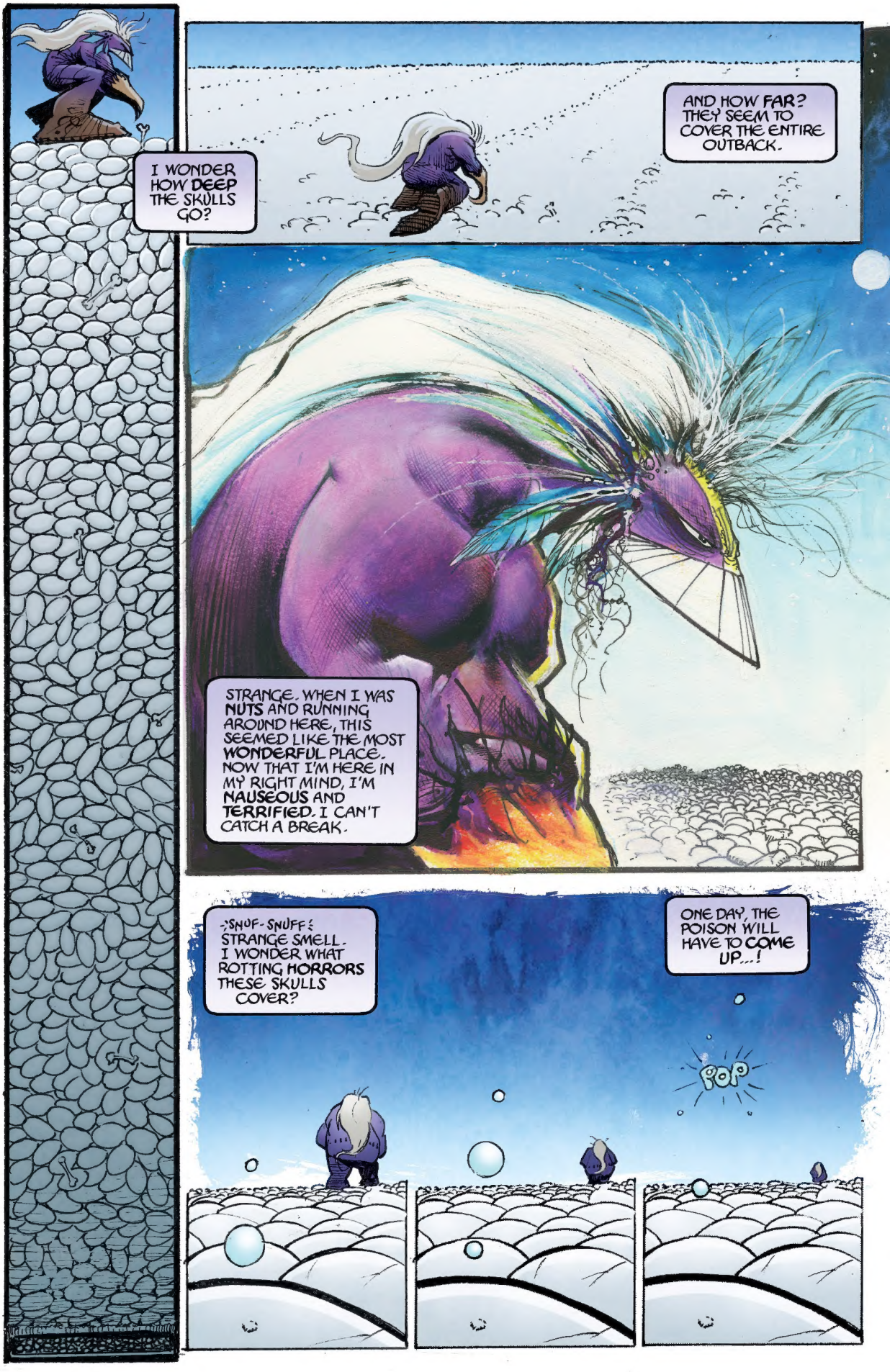
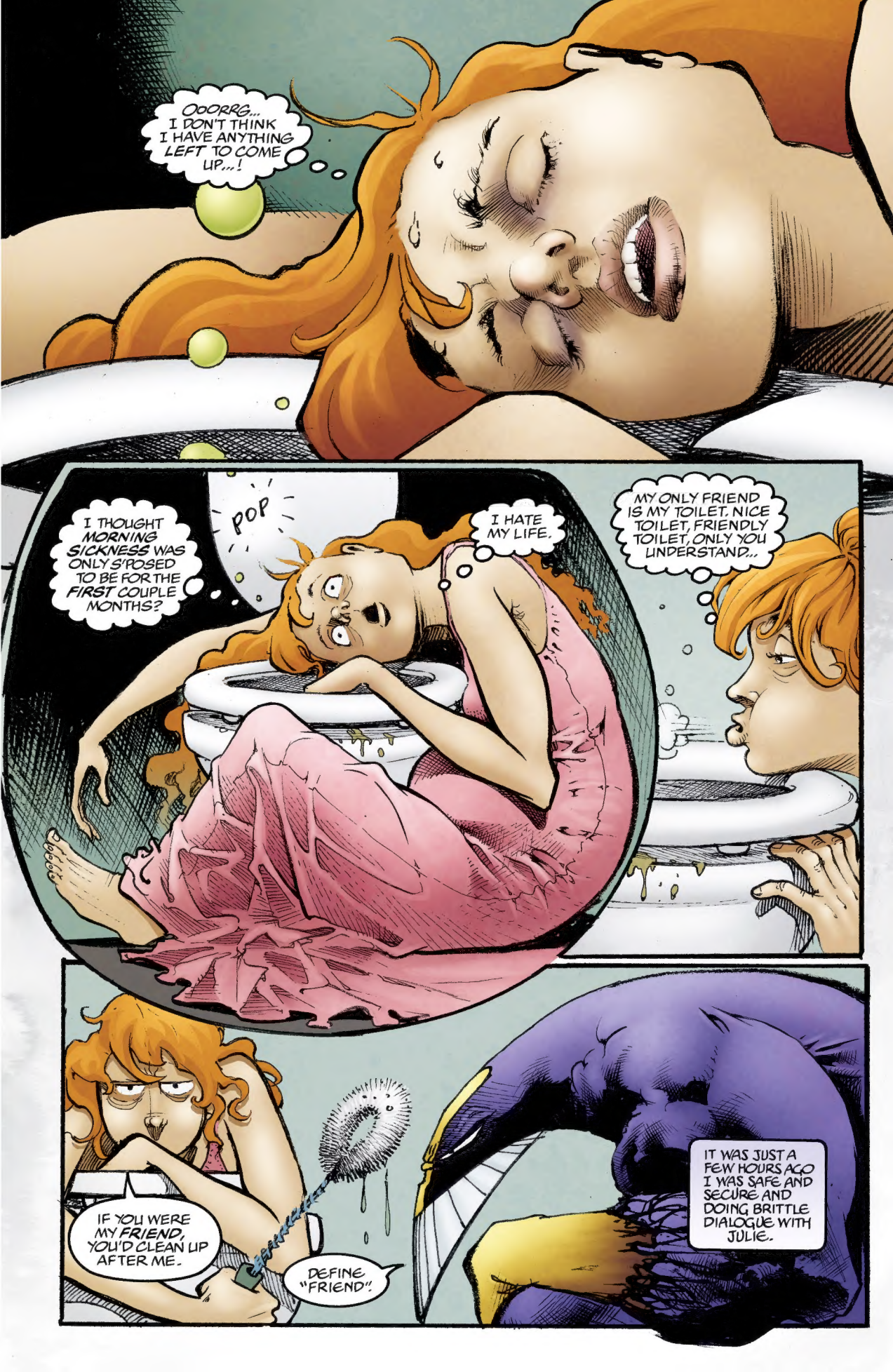

I'M HERE.
I'M IN PANGAEA... THE OUTBACK... THE PRIMITIVE EXPRESSION OF ALL THAT THE CIVILIZED MIND DESIRES AND FEARS!
EXCEPT THE OUTBACK I REMEMBER WAS A LUSH AND VERDANT GRASSLAND... NOT A DESERT COVERED WITH SKULLS!

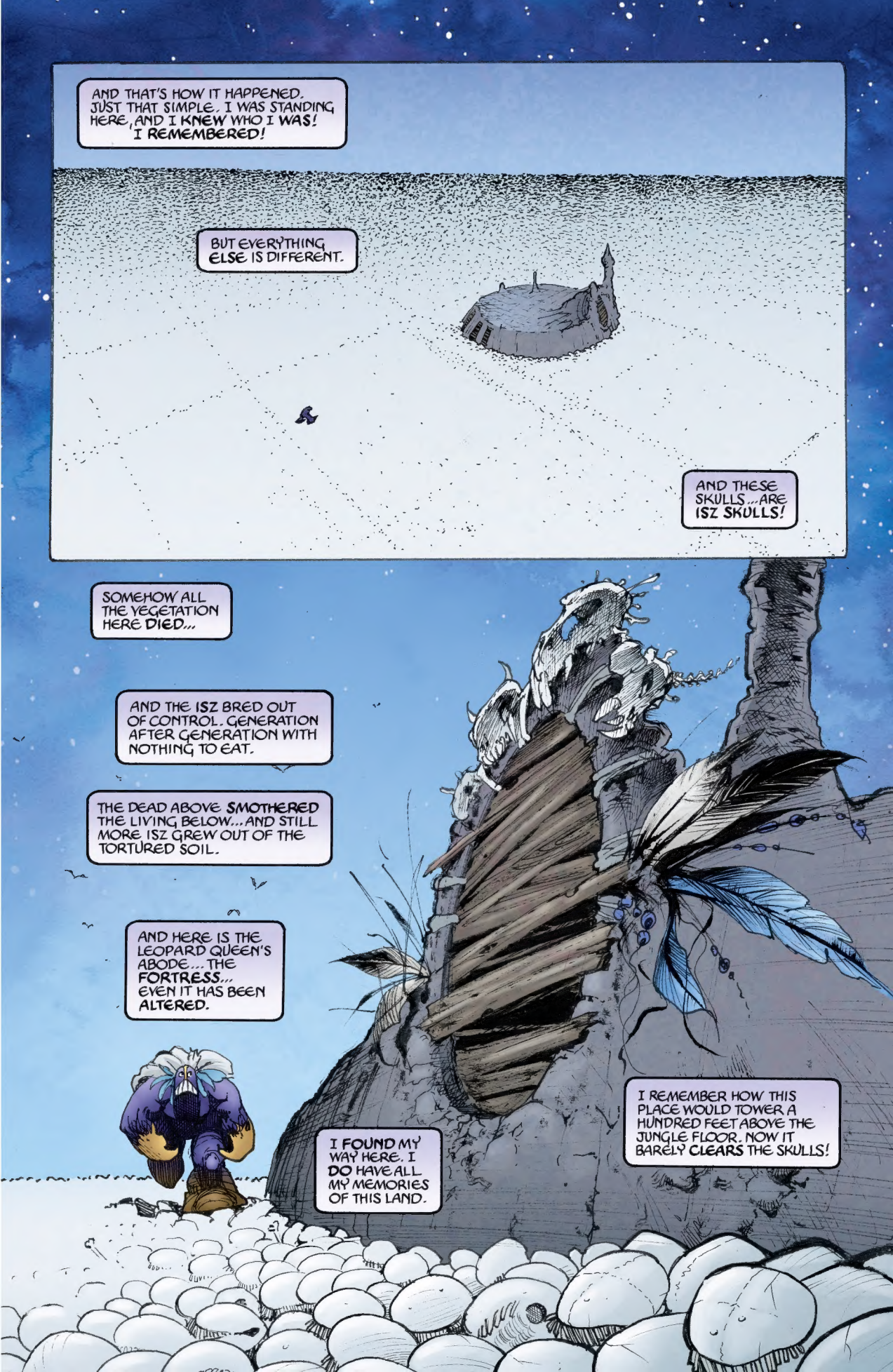

I WONDER HOW DEEP THE SKULLS GO?
AND HOW FAR? THEY SEEM TO COVER THE ENTIRE OUTBACK.
STRANGE. WHEN I WAS NUTS AND RUNNING AROUND HERE, THIS SEEMED LIKE THE MOST WONDERFUL PLACE. NOW THAT I'M HERE IN MY RIGHT MIND, I'M NAUSEOUS AND TERRIFIED. I CAN'T CATCH A BREAK.
:SNUF- SNUFF: STRANGE SMELL. I WONDER WHAT ROTTING HORRORS THESE SKULLS COVER?
ONE DAY, THE POISON WILL HAVE TO COME UP...!
POP


OOORRG... I DON'T THINK I HAVE ANYTHING LEFT TO COME UP...!
I THOUGHT MORNING SICKNESS WAS ONLY S'POSED TO BE FOR THE FIRST COUPLE MONTHS?
POP
I HATE MY LIFE.
MY ONLY FRIEND IS MY TOILET. NICE TOILET, FRIENDLY TOILET, ONLY YOU UNDERSTAND...
IF YOU WERE MY FRIEND, YOU'D CLEAN UP AFTER ME.
DEFINE "FRIEND".
IT WAS JUST A FEW HOURS AGO I WAS SAFE AND SECURE AND DOING BRITTLE DIALOGUE WITH JULIE.

I STILL DON'T SEE WHY YOU HAVE TO CHANGE THE WHOLE FRONT OF THE BUILDING.
'CAUSE I'M CHANGING. THE WORLD IS CHANGING. MY HOUSE SHOULD BE A PART OF-- OF... uh-oh--
:HORRP:
WHOOA. I HATE WALKING IN AFTER THE MOVIE'S STARTED.
I GUESS YOU GUYS ARE TALKING NOW?
I GUESS. I WAS FEELING ROTTEN THIS MORNING, SO I SENT ONE OF THOSE GUYS OUT TO FIND MAXX...
AND I CAME, SHOWING HOW DISMAL THE REST OF MY LIFE IS.
UH-OH...
WHAT?
ACCORDING TO THESE BLUEPRINTS, THOSE WORKMEN JUST CUT THROUGH A BEARING WALL.

IT WAS AWFULLY NICE OF YOU TO RUSH OVER HERE, MAXX...
THAT'S OKAY. I GUESS I FORGIVE YOU, JULIE. NO MATTER HOW BIG A JERK YOU WERE OR HOW SLUTTY YOU ACTED...
YOU'RE STILL MY FRIEND.
WAIT A SECOND. YOU FORGIVE ME...? I WAS THE ONE THAT CAUGHT YOU TWO IN BE
MAXX, LET'S TAKE A WALK BEFORE WE SMOTHER FROM ALL THE GOOD WILL IN THIS ROOM.
MAXX, WE HAVE TO TALK... I LISTENED TO DAD'S TAPES... THEY TOLD ME EVERYTHING!
THAT NIGHT, IT WASN'T OUR BODIES THAT JOINED, IT WAS OUR MINDS! WE HAD EACH OTHER'S DREAMS... I KNOW WHO YOU ARE!
BUT MORE IMPORTANT... I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOTTA DO! WE HAVE TO GO BACK WHERE IT STARTED IN THIS WORLD, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, YOU HAVE TO GO INTO THE OUTBACK AS YOURSELF!
YOU HAVE TO BRING ON THE HEADACHE... GO TOWARDS THE NOISE. CONTROL THE PROCESS!
CAN YOU AT LEAST TRY, DAVE?

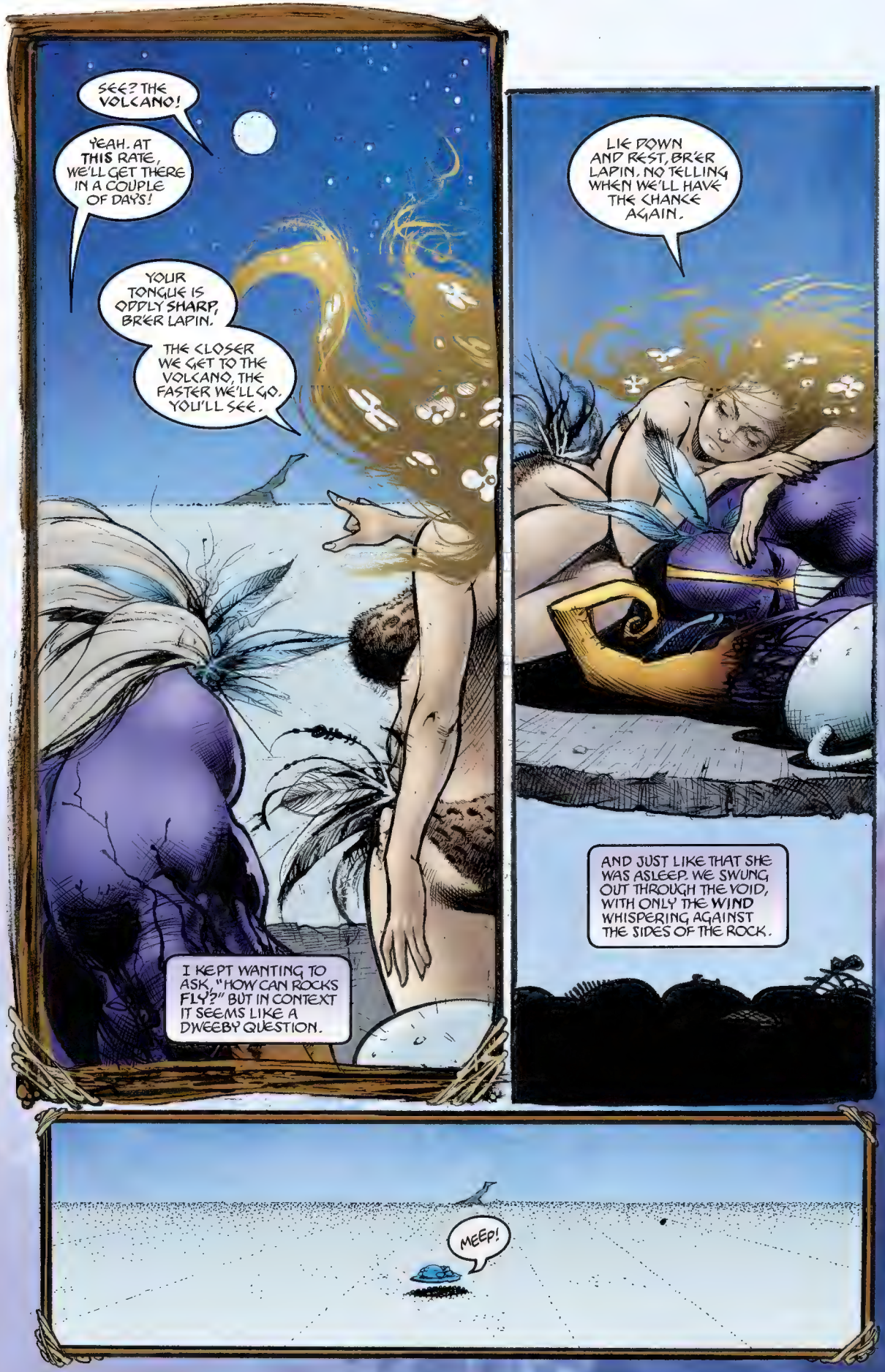
WHY DID SHE CALL ME THAT
UHHH...! IT'S STARTED!
I WILL TRY!
I WILL MOVE TOWARDS THE SOURCE OF THE DRUMS...! IGNORE THE PAIN! LEAP INTO THE VOID!
CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG
AND FINALLY FIND OUT WHAT THOSE DAMNED CHUNGS MEAN!
FOR I AM THE MAXX!


AND THAT'S HOW IT HAPPENED. JUST THAT SIMPLE. I WAS STANDING HERE, AND I KNEW WHO I WAS! I REMEMBERED!
BUT EVERYTHING ELSE IS DIFFERENT.
AND THESE SKULLS...ARE ISZ SKULLS!
SOMEHOW ALL THE YEGETATION HERE DIED...
AND THE ISZ BRED OUT OF CONTROL. GENERATION AFTER GENERATION WITH NOTHING TO EAT.
THE DEAD ABOVE SMOTHERED THE LIVING BELOW...AND STILL MORE ISZ GREW OUT OF THE TORTURED SOIL.
AND HERE IS THE LEOPARD QUEEN'S ABODE... THE FORTRESS... EVEN IT HAS BEEN ALTERED.
I FOUND MY WAY HERE. I DO HAVE ALL MY MEMORIES OF THIS LAND.
I REMEMBER HOW THIS PLACE WOULD TOWER A HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THE JUNGLE FLOOR. NOW IT BARELY CLEARS THE SKULLS!

I HAVE TO FIND HER.
MY GODDESS. MY...
...QUEEN.
BR'ER LAPIN! I KNEW YOU'D COME!
TAKE OFF YOUR MASK. I HAVE TO BE SURE...
YES, IT'S YOU, BR'ER LAPIN. YOU'RE AS REAL AS THE EDGE ON MY SPEAR!
MY GOD... I'M A BIG BUNNY HERE! NOW I'M REALLY CONFUSED.
BUT YOUR HAIR! AND THE FORTRESS! THEY'VE CHANGED! HAVE YOU HEALED, MY QUEEN?
THE HEALING INSIDE HAS BEGUN, BR'ER LAPIN. BUT THE LAND IS STILL VERY SICK... AND THE POISON MUST BE EXPELLED FROM UNDERNEATH.

HOW I'VE MISSED YOU, BR'ER LAPIN. IT'S LIKE A PART OF MYSELF HAS RETURNED.
ARE YOU STILL HAVING THOSE NASTY NIGHTMARES THAT YOU'RE A MAN?
ACTUALLY, I'M HAVING ONE RIGHT NOW!
IT'S OKAY. YOU'RE SAFE HERE WITH ME, WHERE YOU BELONG.
COME ON. PUT ON YOUR MASK. WE HAVE TO GO.
GO? GO WHERE?
TO THE VOLCANO, OF COURSE. IT'S WHERE THIS ALL BEGAN!
HEY! THERE'S AN ISZ UP HERE!
HE MUST'VE GOTTEN STUCK!
DON'T WORRY. HE'S HARMLESS.

YOU SEE, WE HAVE TO GET THERE IN A HURRY...SO WE'LL GO BY ROCK.
YOU MEAN, BREAK OFF A LAYER LIKE... THIS?
JUST WHEN I FEEL MY LIFE IS UNDER CONTROL, SOMEBODY SAYS SOMETHING LIKE, "WE'LL GO BY ROCK"!
NO, NO! YOU BROKE IT!
I'M SO TIRED OF SCREWING UP!
CRACK!
MEEP!
THIS IS OKAY. IT'S STILL BIG ENOUGH TO HOLD US. AND WE'LL NEED THESE VINES...
HEY! IT'S STARTING TO...
WHUMP!
JUMP ON! IT'S MOVING!
...FLOAT! IT'S STARTING TO FLOAT!
DON'T PANIC. IT'S NOT MOVING THAT FAST.


SEE? THE VOLCANO!
YEAH. AT THIS RATE, WE'LL GET THERE IN A COUPLE OF DAYS!
YOUR TONGUE IS ODDLY SHARP, BR'ER LAPIN.
THE CLOSER WE GET TO THE VOLCANO, THE FASTER WE'LL GO. YOU'LL SEE.
I KEPT WANTING TO ASK, "HOW CAN ROCKS FLY?" BUT IN CONTEXT IT SEEMS LIKE A DWEEBY QUESTION.
LIE DOWN AND REST, BR'ER LAPIN. NO TELLING WHEN WE'LL HAVE THE CHANCE AGAIN.
AND JUST LIKE THAT SHE WAS ASLEEP. WE SWUNG OUT THROUGH THE VOID, WITH ONLY THE WIND WHISPERING AGAINST THE SIDES OF THE ROCK.
MEEP!

WAKE UP, BR'ER LAPIN. WE'RE NEARLY THERE.
IT WAS NEARLY LATE AFTERNOON. I HAD SLEPT THROUGH THE NIGHT AND MOST OF THE FOLLOWING DAY. SURREALISM TAKES A LOT OUT OF YOU.
HEY, IT'S BIGGER!
THE FASTER WE GO, THE WIDER IT GROWS, REMEMBER?
UH, SURE!
THE SUN'S GOING DOWN. OUR LUCK IS HOLDING! TWILIGHT IS THE BEST TIME FOR THIS SORT OF THING.
WHAT SORT OF THING?
WHY, SACRIFICIAL MAGIK, OF COURSE. IT'S ALL THAT WILL SAVE THE UNIVERSE.
THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP
I'D FORGOTTEN JUST HOW MUCH I HATE SAVING THE UNIVERSE.
THE QUESTION I SHOULD'VE ASKED RIGHT ABOUT NOW WAS, "WHAT SACRIFICE?"
MEEP!
THERE'S NOTHING LIKE FLYING ON A SLAB OF ROCK OVER AN ENDLESS FIELD OF SKULLS TOWARD A MYSTICALLY SMOLDERING VOLCANO TO REALLY GIVE YOU A SENSE OF YOUR OWN MORTALITY.
CAN WE STEER THIS THING OR ARE WE ON AUTOPILOT? I MEAN, WHAT IF SOMETHING'S IN OUR--

CRACK-CRACK-CRACK-

...DODGE.

YIPES! DID YOU *HAVE* TO BREAK ALL THOSE ***STREET-LIGHTS?***

DID YOU EVEN *HEAR* ME SAY *DUCK?*

AND *WHY* DO WE HAVE TO RIDE *ON TOP* OF THE BUS?

BECAUSE I AM THE MAXX!

CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG

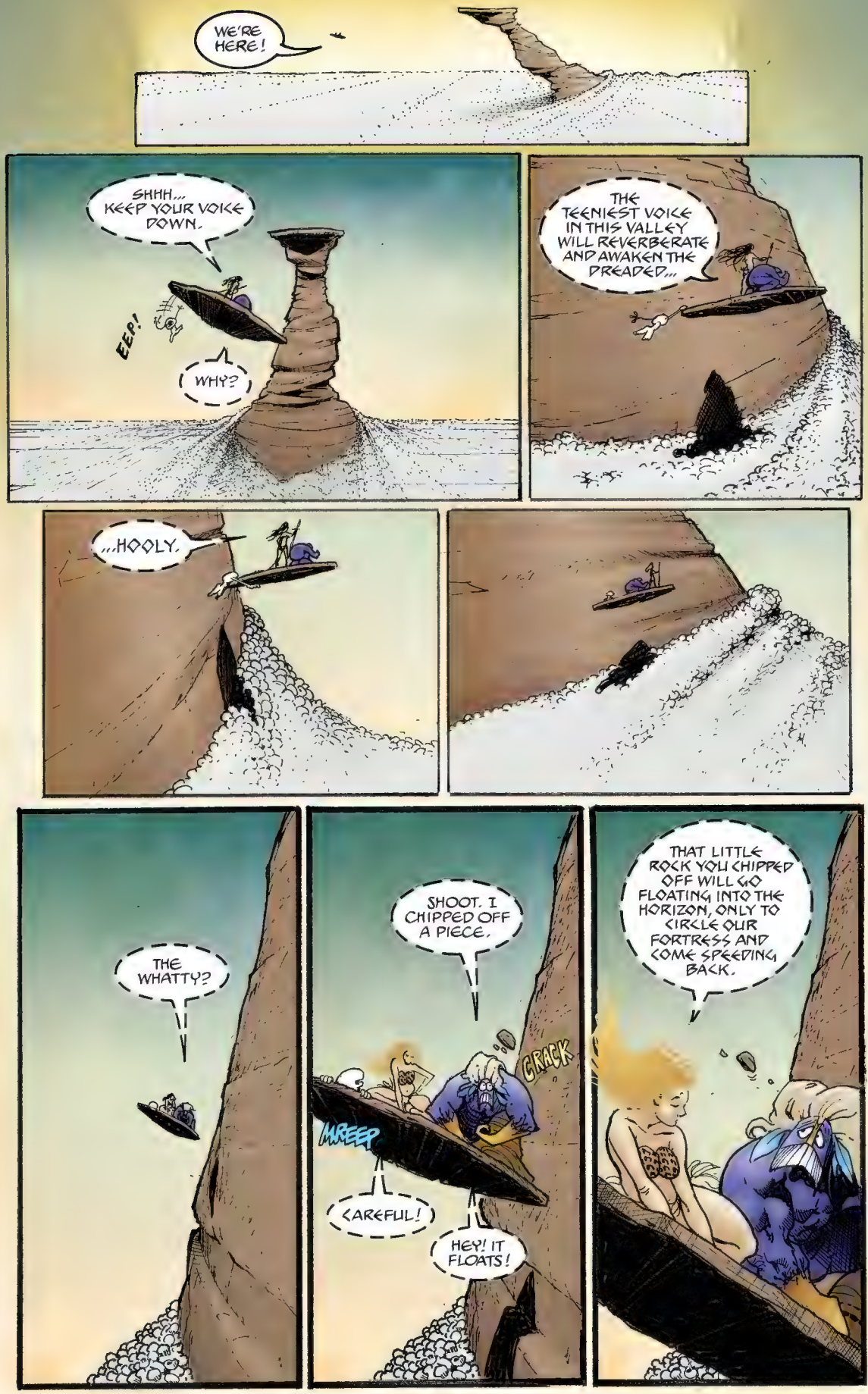
IS THERE EVER A TIME YOU *DON'T* SAY THAT?

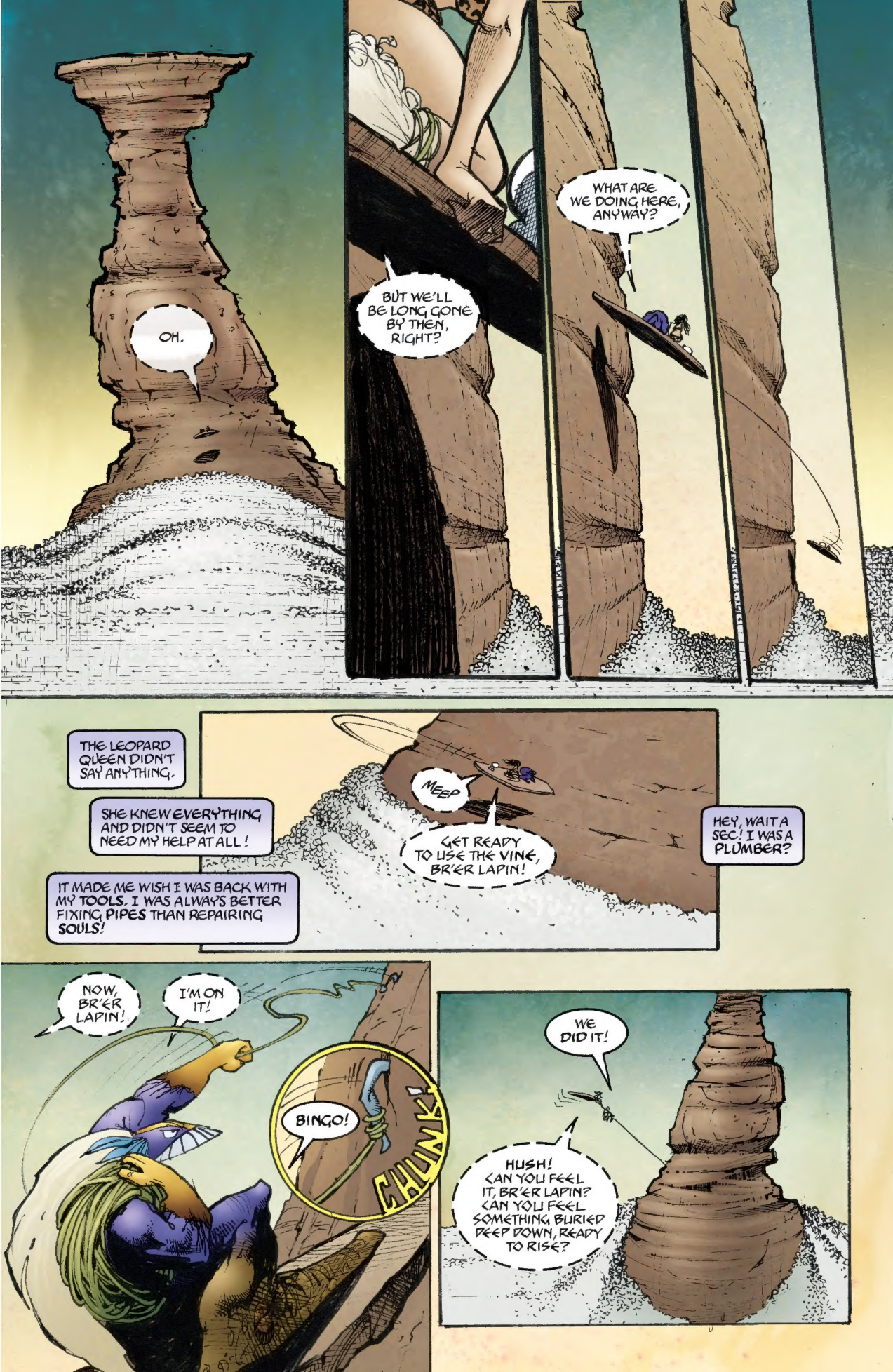
NO. NOT REALLY.

IS IT WORKING? ARE YOU IN *BOTH* PLANES OF EXISTENCE AT ONCE?

I THINK SO. IT'S NOT PERFECT AND WE AREN'T **BOTH** GETTING FEEDBACK AT ONCE...

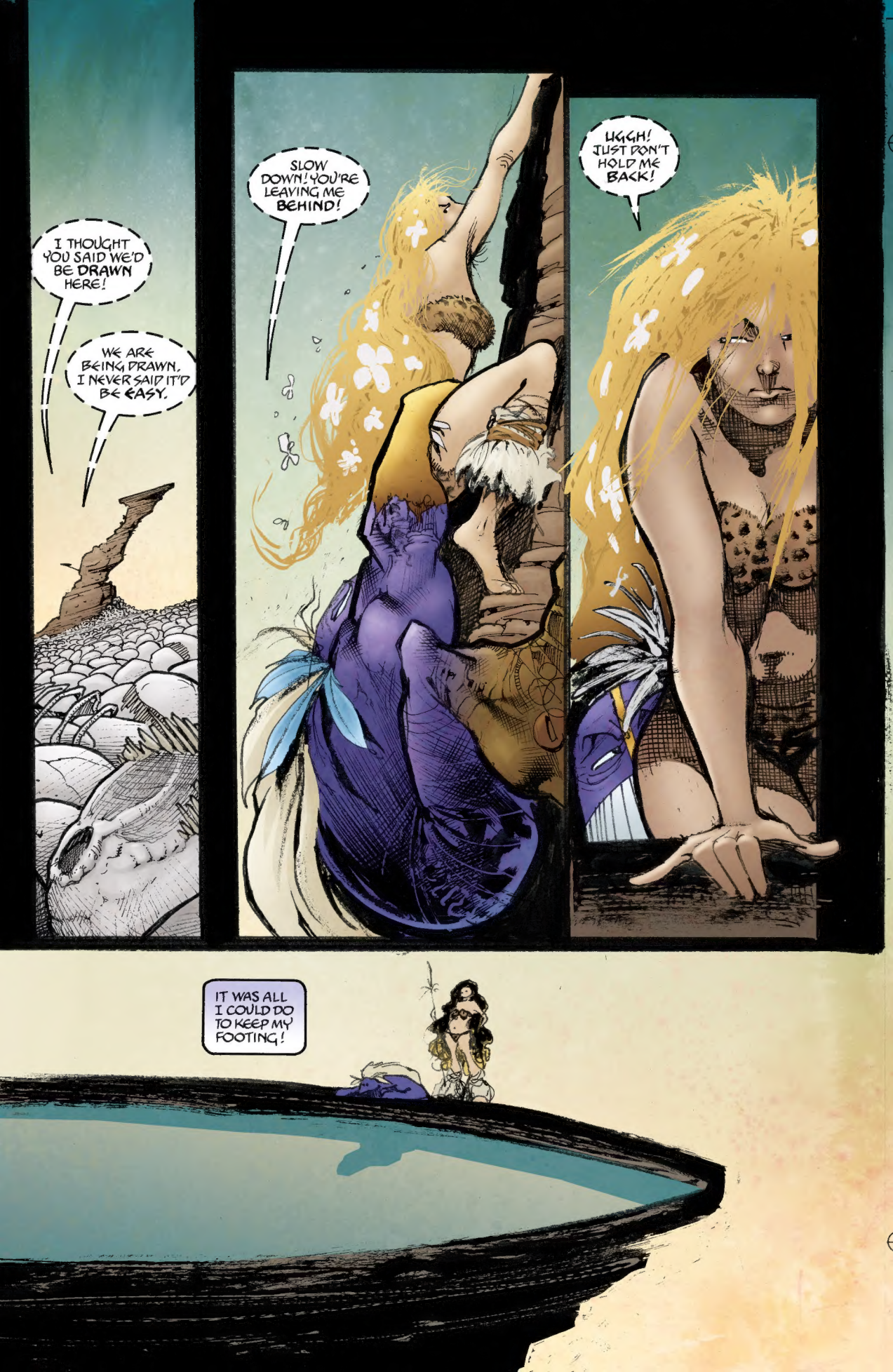
BUT I THINK IF I CAN KEEP GOING, I'LL REACH THE PLACE WHERE THE TWO UNIVERSES **JOIN**...WHEREVER THAT IS.


WE'RE HERE!
SHHH... KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN.
EEP!
WHY?
THE TEENIEST VOICE IN THIS VALLEY WILL REVERBERATE AND AWAKEN THE DREADED...
...HOOLY.
THE WHATTY?
SHOOT. I CHIPPED OFF A PIECE.
CRACK
MREEP
CAREFUL!
HEY! IT FLOATS!
THAT LITTLE ROCK YOU CHIPPED OFF WILL GO FLOATING INTO THE HORIZON, ONLY TO CIRCLE OUR FORTRESS AND COME SPEEDING BACK.


OH.
BUT WE'LL BE LONG GONE BY THEN, RIGHT?
WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE, ANYWAY?
THE LEOPARD QUEEN DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.
SHE KNEW EVERYTHING AND DIDN'T SEEM TO NEED MY HELP AT ALL!
IT MADE ME WISH I WAS BACK WITH MY TOOLS. I WAS ALWAYS BETTER FIXING PIPES THAN REPAIRING SOULS!
MEEP
GET READY TO USE THE VINE, BR'ER LAPIN!
HEY, WAIT A SEC! I WAS A PLUMBER?
NOW, BR'ER LAPIN!
I'M ON IT!
BINGO!
CHUNK!
WE DID IT!
HUSH! CAN YOU FEEL IT, BR'ER LAPIN? CAN YOU FEEL SOMETHING, BURIED DEEP DOWN, READY TO RISE?

I REMEMBERED THE HOT, FLARING LAVA, THE BURNING WHEN I DIPPED MY CLAWS IN IT TO **TEMPER** THEM, SO MANY YEARS BEFORE...

PAST EVENTS WERE COMING BACK TO ME IN A **FLOOD!**


I THOUGHT YOU SAID WE'D BE DRAWN HERE!
WE ARE BEING DRAWN. I NEVER SAID IT'D BE EASY.
SLOW DOWN! YOU'RE LEAVING ME BEHIND!
UGGH! JUST DON'T HOLD ME BACK!
IT WAS ALL I COULD DO TO KEEP MY FOOTING!

HEY! IT'S JUST WATER!
SILLY RABBIT! THAT'S JUST ON TOP!
UNDERNEATH...
...THERE'S SOMETHING THAT WANTS TO COME UP.